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An Entry into Women's Education

An average American student will receive 445 minutes of education in an 8-hour school day, roughly 5 days a week. Unfortunately, this is not experienced by students all over the world; however, when we take a close look at women's education across the globe, the difference is even more noticeable. There seems to be hesitancy when it comes to providing women, mostly in developing parts of the world, the access to basic education that our inborn human rights grant us all. The educated gender gap is too extreme to be left unnoticed, which leaves me, a female student, baffled. Why are we allowing this to happen at such a rapid rate while also knowing it's ongoing? The advancements made with the internet have opened our eyes to many atrocities in this world, yet this, and others, remain largely unresolved.

A quick search online leads to uncovering a list of countries that aren't making any real moves to close the educated gender gap. Many of these countries find themselves in predicaments of being a conflict zone or in the state of being considered 'developing'. Many girls and boys alike in the western part of the world are gifted the ability to learn on an even playing field. While in a location such as Africa, boys receive the education as the majority of girls stay back at home (Smapse Education). This is due to many families dealing with poverty or a similar situation that takes priority over the literacy of their daughters. Being married off in hopes of a better future is profound in developing parts of the world, of course depending on the culture, but is seen as more likely than not. Looking at more recent statistics with the event of COVID-19, even fewer women were able to receive proper education to squash illiteracy. A statistical study conducted in the year 2022 through UN Women, showcases that the two-year

reigning pandemic added difficult pressure on top of the already struggling women's education efforts in third-world countries. Researchers took a survey worldwide and discovered numbers that are higher than they should ever be, “More than half of the nearly 130 million girls not enrolled in formal education worldwide reside in crisis-affected countries,” (UN Women). A number that some women might not even be able to comprehend depending on where they reside; plus it depends if their human right is being honored by providing them a proper and thoughtful education.

The failure of introducing literacy to women is withholding a whole world of comprehension. Opening the door and allowing future and current generations would lead to untapped knowledge from their points of view. The view from someone who previously had no clue what the letters in a line meant. Leaving a whole group of people naive, based almost solely on their gender, is only limiting the progress of humans as a whole. It's keeping the general public from experiencing a surge in thought. Women are capable of so many advancements yet in developing countries, they face gender-based violence for simply trying to learn.

Fortunately, efforts have not gone completely unnoticed. Brave women who are experiencing injustice firsthand, are finding the courage to stand up for what they deserve and helping those around them receive the same benefits of the educational field. Though few at a time, those who do enact a change, unfortunately, have to overcome obstacles in addition to already not being granted one of many human rights. Chandraprabha Saikiani, a female advocate from Assam, India, was a trailblazer for women's education earlier in history. Not only did Chandraprabha attend boy-dominant schools; but at the age of 13, she also opened her own school for fellow girls in the area. Creating the Asam Pradeshik Mahila Samity, an organization geared towards spreading women's education and employment, in 1921 was a great gap breaker

in the earlier time frame (shethepeople). Chandraprabha's story accompanies those of many who also made progressive paths in India for women to advance both socially and educationally. Gratitude extends to the many who gave towards the slow but evident cause that will forever be seen.

Joining the public as an advocate for women and the absence of education, Malala Yousafzai, a young female activist from Pakistan, started her movement at just the age of 15. Malala made a speech in 2012, advocating for girls and herself, along with their right to an education. This bravery and courage made Malala a target; she was shot later in the year by a gunman on her school bus (Malala Fund). A serious drawback to publicly addressing an issue that is already in view of the public, yet left untouched. Malala did not let this incident stop her though, she used it to her advantage to start a fund and create a worldwide fight for women who are not allowed to be educated at the same level as men, or able to receive any sort of the matter. Malala promoted the hardships and simply put her reason out there, "I tell my story not because it is unique, but because it is the story of many girls," (Malala Yousafzai).

Similar to the two, of many, individuals who are stepping out to support a cause and right they wholeheartedly believe in; many bigger organizations are doing the same in joining the cause. 60 Million Girls, is based off when it was created in 2006 due to the 60 million primary school girls worldwide who were out of school at the time. This organization is based in Montreal and focuses on helping kids, regardless of gender, thrive in getting the education they desire all across the world. Although they do recognize that women are put at a disadvantage due to being pulled out of what little education they may receive due to an inconvenience, a danger, or a simple bias (60 Million Girls). Another organization that is looking at helping those who need it most, when it comes to opening their eyes up to the true ability and opportunities of the

world, is IIMPACT Australia. This group was created in 2013 and is geared toward helping girls in India receive an education. In a benefitting partnership with IIMPACT India, the two have been helping the cause of basic education for women. In the modern time frame of today, it's estimated that about 40,000 girls are being educated by these two organizations in 11 states within India (IIMPACT Australia). Breaking the wall of gender normalizations and how the two have been separated for far too long. The implementation of organizations like these is paving the way for the future closing of the gap in many ways. It's leveling the playing field for both boys and girls, but really focusing and pinpointing the funding of educating women who would not be able to learn otherwise. The lack of funding that goes into the fundamentals that these girls can work off of is absent and that needs to change drastically.

In the end, the educated gender gap is not simply a few digits. Those digits represent every single woman in the world who is being denied one of their human rights daily. Both genders deserve to be able to read, write, spell, and function in a place higher than what is seen in today's world. Yes, there have been advancements made to create equal opportunities for women, but it has still not been enough. There are currently too many illiterate females of all ages, who will never be able to notice the advantage they are missing, the foothold they need in the world to not crumble with their country's hardships, and most of all; the beauty that comes with being able to understand deeper than the surface level in many topics. The gap needs to close, people need to work together. After all, this is one of many human rights still being violated in the modern age.

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Ariel Mass

Human Rights Essay

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Human Rights Abuses regarding Indigenous Women

Maria FJ, a 31-year-old Maya-Kojobal woman from the municipality of Santa Elena Barillas, Guatemala, was seven months pregnant with twins when she started going into labor. She went to the health care center for help but was told to wait two more months, so she went back to her village to see a private doctor and was told to wait. While at home, she gave birth alone, and her twins died immediately. Maria was charged with infanticide and blamed for the murder of her children. She was sentenced to three years and seven months in prison. (1) This is one example of the abuse indigenous women face. No one should ever have to be blamed for the death of their children and sent to prison. Indigenous women across the world have to face human rights abuses disproportionately compared to non-indigenous women.

Reem Alsalem (a United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, and its causes and consequences) states that indigenous women and girls have to face grave systemic acts of violence that permeate every aspect of their lives while perpetrators can enjoy alarming levels of immunity (2). We see these indigenous women across the world not being allowed rights and being maltreated. In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women report experiencing violence at more than 3X the rate of non-Indigenous women. (5) It is despicable that these women face these abuses. According to the Australian human rights commission (2020), First Nations women across Australia are 32X more likely to be hospitalized due to family violence and 11X more likely to die due to assault than non-Indigenous women. (4) It is absurd that indigenous women have to live a life in which they are mistreated.

More specifically, I want to hone in on the issues within Guatemala. They have the largest indigenous population in Latin America with 6.5 million people. In Guatemala, there have been many unjust issues against indigenous women. In particular, the Guatemalan penal system reflects the discrimination denounced by the "Agreement on Identity and rights of indigenous peoples" which states that, "To overcome the historical discrimination of indigenous peoples, the cooperation of all citizens is required to transform mentalities, attitudes, and behavior, and that this transformation begins with all Guatemalans recognizing the reality of racial discrimination as well as the imperative need to overcome it to achieve true peaceful coexistence," yet today there is discrimination that is very prevalent in Guatemala's justice system. In Guatemala, the percentage of women being stripped of their liberty has increased from 7% to 9%, and the state of Guatemala is not addressing these issues. (6) There also have been increasing cases in which there has been the use of criminal extortion, which could mean that women are re-victimized as they are required to provide bank accounts for extortive deposits, and then forced to withdraw payments. An instance is FES (Name covered for privacy), a 25-year-old woman from Garifuna, Guatemala, who received a call from a friend for her bank number so they could deposit money from a sale they had made. Trusting her friend, she agreed, and a few days later FES received another call from her friend who asked her to withdraw the money she had deposited. At the bank, she was informed there were only 75 quetzals (US \$9.75) in her account. When she left the bank, she was arrested, charged with extortion, and sentenced to six years in prison. There are a plethora of examples in which Indigenous women are being wrongly accused. (6) The Guatemalan prison system is 300% overcrowded, and there are no standards in these prisons. Many don't follow the "United Nations Rules for the treatment of female prisoners and noncustodial measures for known female offenders." Indigenous women

are unfortunately discriminated against due to their ethnic and economic backgrounds. In addition, there is Spanish monolingualism which contributes to violating their rights. Many women are subject to criminal proceedings and admission to detention centers without understanding a word of what is being said.

There are known abuses in Guatemala against Indigenous women. Indigenous women are under the fear of sexual violence and assault. In 2016 however, there was a wave of justice for these Indigenous women. Fifteen Mayan Q'eqchi Indigenous women became the first to win a case against former military officials. These military officials were found guilty of systematically raping these women and subjecting them to sexual and domestic slavery. (8) More recently in January 2022, 5 Maya Achi indigenous women secured the conviction of 5 former paramilitaries for the sexual violence they committed in the municipality of Rabinal, which also occurred in the early 1980s. (9) Although there has been justice for some victims there needs to be more for survivors of abuse in Guatemala. Dr. Jo-Marie Burt (a senior fellow at WOLA specializing in state violence and human rights) states that survivors of abuse in Guatemala need reparations, such as access to health care, education, monetary reparations, and support to rebuild their communities. Guatemala has implemented some reparations, but overall it has largely failed to fulfill the promise to provide integral reparations. (10) There are human rights abuses across Guatemala against indigenous women, and they need to be given human rights.

While there are abuses and discrimination in Guatemala, other nations face the same issues. For example, in Canada, there has been an increasing number of women who have gone missing. According to a 2014 report by the Royal Canadian mounted police, approximately 1,180 indigenous women disappeared or were killed from 1980-2012. A 2019 report by the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (NIMMIWG) stated that

the number was probably higher since many deaths go unreported. Indigenous women represent 16% of the women killed according to government statistics. (1) About 63% of indigenous women have experienced physical or sexual assault in their lifetime. On top of this, there was a sexual assault rate of 115 incidents per 1,000 population which is significantly higher than the rate reported by non-indigenous women(3). Women, from First Nations, need more protection and need to be reported when missing. The widespread disappearances are a cause for concern and should be appearing on people's radars. Missing can turn into murder in little to no time.

In short, we need nations to take responsibility for the abuses Indigenous women face. Indigenous women all over the world face systemic discrimination and acts of violence. Women need the resources to help others from being prosecuted, abused, and discriminated against. The hardships are seen in women's daily lives; lives that are protected by the inborn human right itself. Overall, with the issues being presented, we need to establish a way for indigenous women to have peace.

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